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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "sepC2002" (2002). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. Paper 979.
http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/979

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Bard

THE EXPECTED

Truth carves out the inside of the word
and takes it home. It tastes like peaches.

It is Saturday night all the time
one is always getting ready for the wrong suitor

who turns out to be alas not so bad
only bad enough to keep the right one away

the invisible prince who bring the peach pit home
and presses it hard into the palm of your hand.

That's how you know and then
you send the other one away.

At last you're alone with the one you mean,
the one who hurts, heals, has, haunts,

the one who finally is here.

8 September 2002

DEO GRATIAS

Endorse the obvious, dear wine of day,
let the transactions of human comfort
inveigle the studious theologians.

You are my only god. How small
your cosmos is, this feeble me!

It is a game of cards you play
a seething solitaire, windy day,
everything is displaced, Antarctic Symphony,
wind machine, Scott's diary,

you are my only home. What a strange
house I have dealt myself with the
cards you drew and colored for me,

intrepid salesmen wearing out my stairs,
amateur archbishops blessing me through your windows.

8 September 2002

OPUS

Greedy at growing? No.

Not the quantitas but the quanta,
the giving off, the transmewing,
the light given off by the act,

the return. So many verbs
a the makes noun. What I mean its that it goes on
giving off responses to the endless questions,

that is it responds, it does, it
transforms what it is given
into what is not itself,

and gives it back, that other thing,
the thing we need.

Not me and not not-me.

It is therefore you. It is there for you.

9 September 2002

Marzipan gospels

silk mattresses

for runaway girls

saunas for runaway slaves

refugium for refugees

all cool and leafy, honey

on hand, a trumpet

idling in the neighbor glen

and the sun just rising.

9 September 2002

ESCAPE

Escape is on my mind.

Ralph Avenue, there are girls trapped
in the Good Shepherd home for wayward girls
they see the rising sun glinting on the broken glass
studded into the top of the brick wall
that holds them in. What was wayward?
Bad? How were these girls bad
I wanted to know and no one would tell me.
I had to make up for myself the story
that led them here, that leads me still
all these years, I have loved them
all my life, yearned for them, to free them
from their prison, death by nun,
let them go back to the world, let them go
back to the life of their feelings,
they're all that matter. They are the secret
muses of my book, their cries
of obscenity and tenderness
catch me on the dawn wind,
I try to lift them to the dawn wind,
vainglorious as I am, I lend them my breath
to say their piece, here in the streets
where we move around every day
imagining ourselves to be free
while government angels swoop us to war.

9 September 2002

IN THE SAD RED STONE

in the sad red stone
a violin begins to play
Polish sailor songs
full of dead seagulls

it is not kind to be a candle
the morning mist is the truth of the day
a child wakes knowing it will never be better

someone carves the sun
nothing just happens
surveyors are sneaking
through your mother's meadows
and everything begins again

my poor stone my poor daughter.

10 September 2002

TRYING SO HARD TO PLEASE

Place images of the gods
on other people's fireplaces

turn their private space
into temple
that is, sky

Return everything to sky.
Seeds fall
and someone sweeps them up

plants waters reaps
and flings them back to god
because the sky is always hungry

don't you know that
with all your windows

the cry you hear
you try so hard to explain as just the morning?

10 September 2002

FELONY

Give everything back

when the thief breaks in
and steals everything you need
it is the sky taking back

it is a dream that doesn't go away
and a morning that smells like the night

You try to draw close around a center
and have no center

nothing belongs to you anymore
even the center can be taken away.

11 September 2002

SOME THINGS

Some things reach all the way to the ground
while others cry out weightless in mid air

some things feed on crystals of light the shadows of mercury
whereas other things live in cities and hurt each other

some things never know what to do
and other things are doing all the time and never know it

some things get likened to unusual Hawaiian flowers
others get vilified as lackeys or tradesmen

some things have paper clips keeping them in sequence
some other things can't find their birth certificates no matter where they look

some things are equipped with heat sinks and ailerons
others with exhaust pipes and retractable cowls

some things have skin
other things have memory

some things resembles Chinese blue vases balanced on window sills
other things resemble the autumn wind that troubles the dead flowers in the vase

some things linger in the house of prayer reflecting on the sermon
other things walk along the beach wishing they had clothes to put on

some things agitate for personal dignity
other things lie where they fall and dream about Spain

other things always want something else
other things have their hands in your pocket

other things can see through thick banana leaves
other things come up the stairs with milk all over their hands.

12 September 2002

SHABBY SLIPPERS

with the toe sticks out
the fly sails in the opening door

we have to run around getting it out again
putting more wear and tear on the shoe

it's a beautiful autumn morning
goldfinch on the branch and so forth

in the whole house
the clock is the only thing that works.

12 September 2002

RELIGIOUS PICTURE, WITH SQUIRRELS

Scattering. Scattering seeds, cats
troubling squirrels. Making
this hard. Giving Joseph
things to put in his box.

God is a surprise. If I
had a secret, it would be you.
How wonderful to wake up
with a new set of appetites,

some other man's anxieties,
a whole new phobia. Because.
Because there are so many animals
around my house, lizards and lepers

and maids in waiting, they all
want something, there is nobody
smiling on the other side
of desire. As it is, I chase squirrels

someone chases me.
That's why mathematics is so
comforting, the x , an abstract goal
that works for everybody

and isn't it strange they decided
to teach us algebra at puberty
just when the whole insoluble
equation starts to hurt.

13 September 2002

CAVE

Wait in the word
a shadow inside stone
comes out in someone story
the stylish spelunker
goes down the throat

the talk hour soon
shy dawn rehearses
on my way to you

like a man remembering
the etymology of a word he's afraid to speak.

13 September 2002

COMMON SENSE

where logicians locate
our marriages enough
alike to touch apart to sleep
banishment bed
Achilles wonders
what a father
dreams about his daughter.

13 September 2002

MATINS

Now I am cold.

This tells you
more than I can.

Put yourself
in my shoes

think
what a paperweight thinks

all my answers
shivering in their sleep.

13 September 2002

LITERAT

There is reading then there's reading
the skating and the swimming and the sinking in
then the slow magnificent Mongolfier ascension
quiet balloon above the whole thing
the word of everywhere!

And then the night comes
when no man can read.

13 September 2002

Today is the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. In the old monasteries, Great Lent started today, and lasted all the way through winter, till Easter. Mortification time and reflection time, and taking the measure of silence, and joy in the abstract and the absolute.

The thrill of the absolute.

Sometimes I think the life we live as artists is strangely, even weirdly, akin to the mixture of exaltation and weariness, orgasmic devotions and maddening details, that the mystics report in the never-ending life of prayer - - and (this is exciting, suddenly, to think about) what is prayer but articulation, our breath/vision/hands speaking something into the world?

14 September 2002

age has nothing to do with
desire has nothing to do with
beauty has nothing to do but be

14 September 2002